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ABSTRACT

This paper reports on the use of focus groups at Oakton Community College (Illinois) to connect with classified staff and to get their feedback on key issues. A total of four single-session focus groups, three with classified staff (employees with varying levels of academic preparation and current responsibilities) and one with supervisors/managers, were conducted. Three main topics were discussed: staff development, morale, and compensation/classification. Concerning staff development, a key staff concern was the need for staff-oriented professional development workshops; supervisors, however, expressed a desire for more opportunities to interact and share common concerns with each other. Concerning morale, staff felt morale was strongly connected to having opportunities to be listened to and valued as employees; supervisors focused on improving orientation programs for staff. Concerning compensation and classification issues, staff wanted more information about the system in use at the college and worried about opportunities for upward mobility. The focus group effort has influenced professional development efforts, and has led to plans to develop a supervisor/manager discussion group and to implement annual workshops on compensation and classification. Letters used to solicit focus group participants and the focus group question protocol are appended. (Contains 11 references.) (DB)

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REINFORCING THE SEAMS:
USING FOCUS GROUPS TO CONNECT WITH SPECIFIC EMPLOYEE GROUPS

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Paper presented at the
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Building a Seamless Educational Process"

June 2, 1999

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for Management Research, Policy Analysis, and Planning

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REINFORCING THE SEAMS:
USING FOCUS GROUPS TO CONNECT WITH SPECIFIC EMPLOYEE GROUPS

Abstract

In the fall of 1997, focus groups of classified staff at a midwestern community college were conducted by the college's Director of Human Resources and a Research Intern. There were three main topics of discussion in the focus groups: staff development, morale, and compensation/classification. Data collected in the focus groups were used as the basis for a list of recommendations for action and improvement.

The emphasis in this AIR presentation will be on the use of focus groups for purposes of institutional research and policy/management analysis related to specific employee groups. The presenters will share their experience of this process.

REINFORCING THE SEAMS:
USING FOCUS GROUPS TO CONNECT WITH SPECIFIC EMPLOYEE GROUPS

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REINFORCING THE SEAMS:

USING FOCUS GROUPS TO CONNECT WITH SPECIFIC EMPLOYEE GROUPS

The use of focus groups in higher education research is not new. Focus groups have been convened, with various participants and for a multitude of institutional research and broader higher education research purposes. Bers (1994) reviewed several studies in which focus groups were the main method of data collection. Examples of such uses of focus groups cited by Bers included the following:

- Studying stakeholder needs and expectations of one's institution
- Assessing public perceptions of the community college
- Identifying ways that services or programs at one's institution might be improved
- Understanding the experiences of various student groups
- Obtaining feedback on materials to be used at one's college or university

Judging from the literature, it appears that focus groups are not used as often with faculty or staff in higher education, although group feedback and stakeholder input approaches have often been used as part of the strategic planning process.

Although not new, focus groups are often overlooked as a method of not only collecting data from specific employee groups, but of also reaching out to such groups, and perhaps letting them know by the act of doing so that they are valued by the institution. Indeed, sending them a paper-and pencil survey might convey the same message, to some extent, and would allow more individuals to be included and descriptive statistics to be compiled, but focus groups are more personal and provide opportunities for a richness of data and an opportunity to share stories that just won't fit

on a Likert scale. Of course, individual interviews might be ideal, but professionals in institutional research (or the college departments that seek their assistance) know that extensive individual interviewing is a luxury which few can afford. How might institutional researchers get the maximum return for their investment of time and money, and combine richness and efficiency? Focus groups may be helpful in this regard.

Within the higher education literature, and within higher education institutions themselves, the work and the opinions of faculty receive considerable study and attention. But at every institution, there is a large group of employees whose efforts and professionalism, while seldom documented, is essential to the everyday working of the institution, and integral to its being able to fulfill its mission. These employees may have various classification titles, and are sometimes included under a broader category, such as "classified staff," which may include employees with various levels of academic preparation and current responsibility. Such was the case at our community college, a Midwestern suburban community college with an enrollment of 9,800. Classified staff had been included in employee surveys over the years. Some participated in college committees, and others were depended upon heavily for their expertise by students and faculty alike. Yet, until the fall of 1997, no one had really taken an extensive opportunity to sit down and talk with these employees as a group, to find out how they saw life at the college, and to ascertain what the college might be doing to help them develop professionally. This paper describes how focus groups were utilized at our institution to connect with classified staff and get their feedback on key issues; we will also reflect on the broader implications of our work for those in institutional research or specific

departments who might find the focus group approach useful in policy or management analysis.

Background and Purposes of the Study

Why the Study was Initiated

In the fall of 1997, the Director of Human Resources at the college had been on the job for six months, having relocated from another state. With the assistance of a Research Intern in the College's Office of Research, he scanned the results of an employee survey which had been conducted approximately one year prior, as part of the North Central Association accreditation self-study process. A number of the survey items had relevance to the work of the Human Resources department, such as those pertaining to employee perceptions of assistance they had received related to benefits, recruiting, hiring, and problems with subordinates, as well as the degree to which they felt the college encouraged them to develop professionally, and the level of understanding they had of the college's employee classification system. Employees also provided feedback on whether they had the information or training needed to do their jobs.

There were several items on the survey for which statistically significant differences in responses between administrators, faculty, and staff were found. Some of these areas included level of satisfaction with staff development and perceptions of organizational climate, morale, and interactions among members of different employee groups (faculty, administration, staff). The staff means were often lower on these items, and we wondered why. We wanted to understand more about why the staff felt the way

they did, and perhaps also demonstrate that the new Director was interested in them as employees of the college. Also, just as a fringe benefit, we might also be able to convey to this employee group that someone actually read and paid attention to their responses to large-scale surveys.

Purposes of the Study

Thus, the idea for our focus group study was born. Later in the fall of 1997, the college's Director of Human Resources and a Research Intern from the college's Office of Research conducted three focus groups of classified staff, and an additional focus group of classified staff who served as supervisors/managers. The purpose of conducting the focus groups was threefold:

- To follow up on data gathered in the Fall 1996 Oakton Employee Survey, which was implemented as part of the NCA self-study process.
- To allow the new Director to hear firsthand from classified staff about their professional development needs.
- To set a tone of open communication and concern for the opinions of classified staff.

Methodology

Rationale

The use of focus groups as a method of data collection for purposes of evaluation and institutional research has been widely supported (Bers, 1994; Creswell, 1998; Morgan, 1997; Patton, 1987). Participants are selected according to specific criteria and are therefore not "random;" this fact, along with the small sample size, makes generalization of findings to a broader population inadvisable. Nonetheless, eliciting

feedback on a focused set of issues in a group format is more time-efficient than doing so via individual interviews, and often the presence of other group members enhances and enlivens discussion, providing richer data. Krueger (1988) outlines additional advantages of focus groups, such as the opportunity they provide for further probing, their high face validity, and their low cost in comparison to individual interviewing. Krueger also notes that a focus group interview is a "socially oriented researcher procedure," because it provides an opportunity for participants to interact with other members of a specific group, comparing opinions and sometimes receiving validation or support. In this way, focus groups become a "win-win" experience for both researcher and participant, as proved to be the case in this project.

Sampling Strategies: Selection of Participants

In October, three randomly selected lists of 15-20 classified staff were developed, two from the college's main campus and one from the satellite campus about 10 miles away. Care was taken to ensure that employees from various classification grades were included in each sample. Knowing that all participants invited for each time slot would not necessarily be available, the goal was to have approximately ten participants present at each focus group session. Focus group experts, such as Greenbaum (1988) and Krueger (1988) generally recommend that the ideal size of a focus group is from seven or eight to ten people. This size group is small enough to afford participants a chance to have input into the conversation, but large enough to afford some variety and richness in the interaction.

Individual letters inviting staff to participate in the groups were sent out seven to ten days prior to the meeting dates (in late October and early November), requesting an

RSVP by phone a few days in advance of the sessions. A letter to each supervisor explaining the groups and requesting their support of a specific employee's attendance had been sent a day or two in advance of the participants' invitation letters (see Appendix A for sample invitation letters). Response to the invitation letters was positive; totals of nine, ten, and eleven people attended the two main campus and the one satellite campus sessions, respectively.

In response to data collected in these three focus group sessions, the decision was made to add a fourth focus group of classified staff who were supervisors/managers. Obtaining their feedback on many of the same issues would help round out the data and provide an additional perspective from within the classified staff employee group. In early December, similar invitation letters were sent out to approximately 20 classified supervisors/managers. Response to our request for participants was excellent; ten of those invited to participate in the focus group called in an RSVP in advance, and four more individuals came without having phoned in first. Obviously, having fourteen participants in the group exceeded what we felt was an optimal group size, but we were quite encouraged by the supervisors' positive response to our invitation, and we did not turn anyone away. With more advance notice, we would have chosen to split the respondents into two groups.

Data Collection

In advance, the decision was made to have both the Human Resources (HR) Director and the Research Intern be involved in facilitating the focus groups. Since the intern was not a permanent employee of the college, no potential conflict was seen in her involvement with the groups. The decision to have the HR Director help conduct the

groups was one which was given thoughtful consideration. While his facilitation of the groups would not have been recommended had the HR Director been well-known to staff, the use of the HR Director as an interviewer was seen as appropriate for this study, due to his newness on the job, and the positive message his involvement with the groups would convey to staff. Indeed, several of the focus group participants indicated that they were pleased with his personal involvement in the study, because it meant he cared about them as employees.

Focus group sessions were one and a half hours in length for the first three groups, and one hour long for the fourth group. Refreshments were provided, and name tags were utilized in order to help the facilitators address participants by name. The two facilitators worked from question protocols which they had developed (see Appendices B and C), although some flexibility was afforded the participants, so that they might have opportunities to provide illustrations and explanations for the ideas which they shared, and to emphasize topic areas which they felt were important. The question protocol provided a framework for discussion, and the facilitators used it to bring back focus when the conversation seemed be going astray, or when one participant had held the floor for a disproportionate period of time. [Greenbaum (1988) and Krueger (1988) provide comments on artful development and use of question protocols.] Sessions were audiotaped (with confidentiality of the tapes being assured to participants), so that the facilitators could be freed from extensive note taking duties during the interactions. Participants were encouraged to respect the boundaries of the group's interaction that day, and to not share specific comments made by their coworkers with others not in attendance.

Data Analysis, Findings, and Presentation of Findings at the College

Taming the data. As one might imagine, the task of managing audiotape data from group interactions including from nine to fourteen people was initially a daunting prospect. Rather than transcribe verbatim into script form (since it was not always possible to identify who was speaking on the tape), the tapes were transcribed in bulleted form back onto the question lists, so the data were automatically sorted somewhat as they were recorded in written form. It should be noted that, in order to ensure the confidentiality that was guaranteed to participants, great care was taken when typing up the question-response lists, so that any identifying information, such as names of people or departments, was not included. For some items, bulleted responses were rearranged on the paper so as to be grouped by similar responses, or were even subcategorized further under a question according to theme. One example of subcategorization which occurred based on participant responses was the question about morale at the college, the responses to which were broken down further into the categories "general," "related to administration and supervision," "interpersonal issues," and "stratification issues." Another instance of this type of grouping responses according to theme was when supervisor responses to a professional development question were sorted as "identification of training needs," "funding issues," " and "sensitivity to timing issues."

Data from the first three focus groups (classified line staff) were compiled onto the same question list, but data from the group of classified staff who were also supervisors or managers were compiled onto a separate list, so that any differences (and similarities) in their responses could become apparent. For the first three groups and the last supervisors' group, there were three main topic areas: staff development, morale, and

compensation/classification. The bulleted question and response lists provided us with a manageable data set to read and re-read, in order to identify important themes within each topic area.

About the Findings. It is at this point that we face a delicate dilemma often encountered by institutional researchers: how to share one's experience of a successful IR effort, without disclosing too much about specific findings that might not be all positive? With the idea that institutional research is at heart about using data to improve campus life in some way, we plunge ahead, knowing that this story has a happy ending and that is, after all, what such testimonials are all about—both the dirty laundry and the learning curve. At any rate, it is very likely that other higher education institutions might have similar findings if they had conversations with their staff employees.

Under the first topic, staff development, participants gave their opinions related to the college's responsibility to develop its staff, in light of the educational mission of the institution, and they offered suggestions as to how this might be better accomplished. Some key areas of concern were the need for staff-oriented professional development workshops which were geared to their needs, both by topic and by timing during the academic year, and the need for increased funding (and equity in its dissemination) for off-campus professional development activities. All four focus groups discussed ideas of topics for training, for themselves *and* for their supervisors or subordinates. Participants in the supervisors/managers group expressed the desire for more opportunities to interact with each other to share common concerns and to develop themselves as managers.

The second topic of discussion was morale at the college. Some participants had strong feelings on this issue. Morale varied from department to department, and was seen

as being strongly connected to having opportunities to feel listened to and valued as employees. Supervisors also shared feelings of responsibility for the morale of their departments, which often involved striving to set a positive tone and working as a liaison between their subordinates and the administration or the broader college community. The idea of improving orientation programs for staff so that they might better connect to the college community was explored at length in the supervisors' focus group. All four groups cited stratification issues between administration, faculty, and staff as being an area of great concern.

Compensation and classification issues, the third topic of discussion, were seen as being closely tied to morale for the staff. They wanted more information about the classification and compensation system in use at the college, and worried about their chances for upward mobility given the current system. Many felt that complete information on the system had been closely guarded by those who had been responsible for it in the past; the system was generally described as being "mysterious."

Presentation of Findings. A nine page internal report was prepared by the researchers, which detailed the purposes of the study, the data collection procedures, findings sorted by the three main topic areas (with reference to the bulleted question-response list as an appendix to the report), and a list of "next steps and recommendations." The latter section was also divided along the three main category lines, and included recommendations of institutional committees that should have access to the report's recommendations, suggestions related to funding of professional development activities, calls to examine current policies and practices pertaining to staff, some specific training categories which needed to be addressed, and a commitment on the

part of the Human Resources department to initiate a series of informational "roundtable" sessions pertaining to the school's classification and compensation system. The report was shared with the college's president, the president's council, and the staff subcommittee of the newly formed professional development steering committee.

Impact of Study

Staff Development

Around the same time this study was being conducted, a new Professional Development Program Steering Committee was appointed by the president of the college, and charged with the task of identifying ways to deliver a comprehensive staff development program. Central to the action was equal representation of all employee groups. Three subcommittees were established, focusing on faculty, staff, and administrative development, respectively. The committee (especially the staff development subcommittee) had access to the report on the focus group study and its executive summary.

Several of the professional development program objectives developed by the subcommittee were influenced by the focus group findings. For example, staff development activities became imbedded in the school year, rather than isolated within preterm theme weeks (found to be a busy, impossible time for many staff to get away for training). The staff development subcommittee helped identify specific training and development needs, some of which were tracked into various strands of a new and improved "Staff Week," held during spring break when the campus was fairly quiet.

Concerns about staff development funding expressed in the focus groups are also being addressed. While classified staff already had as part of their contract a set dollar amount per year available for outside professional development activities, some degreed staff who were part of national professional organizations have expressed a need for additional funds to attend out-of-town conferences. At this time, as the new classified staff contract is being negotiated, a clause has been proposed which will increase the annual allocation for professional development for some professional and technical staff members.

Morale

Of course, the impact of this study on morale at the college is more nebulous, and to some extent remains to be seen, since some initiatives in this regard have yet to be implemented. At this point, we can observe anecdotally that staff seem to be pleased with the revisions that have been made in professional development activities sponsored by the college. An additional suggestion made in the focus groups which participants felt might enhance supervisor morale (and perhaps indirectly, then, line staff morale) was the idea of convening a supervisor/manager group meeting periodically throughout the year, to provide these individuals a chance to share issues of common concern and to participate in occasional training activities related to employee supervision. This is a project which will be undertaken by a graduate intern who will be joining the Human Resources staff in the near future. The intern's goal will be to get such a group up and running, so that it continues into the future as a regular part of development for this particular staff group.

Another possible project for the HR intern will be to develop a staff orientation program (perhaps similar to one already in place for new faculty), to be started two or three times a year, since staff have more irregular starting dates than faculty. This program would have the aim of helping new staff feel more connected to the college and more knowledgeable about its various departments and services. An additional benefit of such a group would be the acquaintances forged with fellow classified staff participating in one's orientation group; having a few more friendly faces to greet in the halls might make a big difference in perceptions of morale and overall campus climate.

Compensation/Classification Issues

Shortly after the focus groups were conducted, the Office of Human Resources began conducting workshops on compensation and classification, and deemed that this would be an annual program offered by the department. The workshops were designed to increase employee knowledge of compensation systems and factors associated with determining salary levels. Interestingly, these roundtable sessions had an unexpected positive effect on morale in the first year, in the following way: now better informed about the system in use at the college, some staff who had made unsuccessful bids for upgrades in the past chose not to do so this year. Therefore, they did not have the experience of feeling like they had wasted their time and therefore, there were not the same deleterious effects on morale around this issue as in the past.

Broader Implications for Institutional Researchers

The focus group study of classified staff at our Midwestern community college conducted in the fall of 1997 provides a classic example of how Institutional Research

can work with specific college departments to help them formulate and answer research questions which will ultimately inform practice and improve institutional life in some way. The use of focus groups to develop and refine survey instrumentation has been documented in the literature, and focus groups can also be used to follow up and seek elaboration upon data collected in surveys (Bers, 1994). The survey followup approach appeared to be a key strength of this project, because of the organizational dynamics present in the institution (and many higher education institutions) which made this employee group feel undervalued at times. Here, someone had paid attention to how their responses to survey items varied from those of their faculty and administrative counterparts, and wanted to understand this better. Focus groups provide an opportunity to verify "hearsay" or "the word on the streets," and channel such discourse constructively and in a focused manner, so as to benefit the institution.

Connecting with Specific Employee Groups

Thus, a connection with the classified staff at our college was forged—both a connection with Human Resources, and one with the more loosely defined "administration" of the college, represented by the intern from the college's Office of Research. Not only were classified staff (and not faculty) being sought out for participation, but multiple groups were being conducted (on the main and satellite campuses), tapes were being made, and supervisors were being strongly encouraged to release employees for participation. Participants offered numerous stories of positive and negative experiences at the college, gave suggestions on how the college could help them be lifelong learners just like it wanted people in the community to be, and proposed ideas of ways to make the employees at the college more cohesive and their particular group

more included and valued by the institution. They felt listened to, and had the unexpected benefit of meeting each other, some for the first time, and of hearing their perceptions echoed—or refuted—by their peers. For once, the faculty were not the main emphasis, and someone wanted to hear from what Deal (1994) calls the "behind the scenes employee."

As discussed earlier, in this case, the HR Director's presence was seen as an asset to the study, and conveyed a positive message to participants, but focus group facilitators' closeness to those being studied should always be taken into consideration. The general rule of thumb is that group facilitators should be fairly removed from day-to-day involvement with the target group, mostly so that participants will feel free to participate honestly and openly. Bers (1994) notes that the extra cost of bringing in an outside facilitator will be well worth it in terms of enhanced quality and credibility of a study.

As a way of further sealing the connection between the researchers and the target group, once the report on the study was written and an executive summary of the study was available, thank you letters were sent to each participant, along with a copy of the executive summary. This further demonstrated that their input was heeded and had been put in a form that would enhance its use by the institution.

Policy/Management Analysis

A focus group approach can be used as a way of gathering stakeholder perspectives from specific employee groups on any number of matters pertaining to institutional policy, management, or program implementation. Clear purposes for one's study must be identified up front, and the development of research questions and

interview protocols must proceed from this starting point. The issue of utilization of one's findings should be addressed in advance. Who will receive the report on the study? What kind of report will it be? How do we hope the findings will be used to inform practice?

Just as we sought in our project to follow up on previous survey data, both for our own information and to convey to classified staff that the administration was paying attention, the importance of follow up on focus group data cannot be emphasized enough. After all, that is the broader purpose of gathering such data in the first place—to put it to positive use in one's institution. As with other types of institutional data collected by institutional researchers, one would hope that it would have a purpose further than that of satisfying one's board or external constituencies. Because focus group data collection is not anonymous, because it focuses more on the whys and wherefores than the how-manys, and because it often requires more time investment on the part of participants, we owe it to the participants to make it apparent down the road that what they have shared with us has been put to good use. In the case of focus group studies of specific employee groups, the burden of this responsibility feels heavier somehow. Is there not an increased onus, with groups who may perceive themselves as marginalized, to make good on our promise that the input will be used to effect some sort of change? If not, such employee groups might feel that, once again, their opinions have been sought, but to no avail. Perhaps they are not so "valued" after all. The effects on morale could be quite negative. Fryer and Lovas (1991) warn, "People who do not believe their institution values them are hindered in valuing their institution" (p. 8).

Conclusion

The ever-changing environment, both within and outside higher education institutions, requires that each college or university and its employees continue growing and changing, in order to better fulfill the institution's mission. Indeed, the ability to keep learning in the face of change has been described as a key characteristic of both successful businesses *and* successful higher education institutions (Morgan & Weckmueller, 1991; Rostek & Kladivko, 1988). In order for our college to do this for its classified staff, it was necessary to listen to them first. The fall 1997 focus groups provided an opportunity to not only collect data related to staff development needs, but to make an employee group feel valued by the institution. The classified staff at our college—and at any higher education institution-- are truly a valuable human resource. The challenge for institutional researchers and the departments with whom they collaborate is to take the rich data, strong opinions, and real-life experiences of this group and translate them into visible change, making their institution not only a good place to learn, but a good place to work. Robert Levering (1988) states: "Good workplaces assume that a firm's growth is due largely to the efforts of the people working there. So they have policies and practices that offer those people the opportunity to grow with the enterprise" (p. 210).

APPENDIX A:
LETTERS USED TO RECRUIT PARTICIPANTS AND SECURE SUPERVISOR SUPPORT

October 22, 1997

Dear _____:

We would like to invite you to participate in a discussion group that will help us learn more about classified staff at __CC. We'd like to know more about their professional development needs and their opinions on other issues that face employees here at ___. We plan to meet with a small cross-section of classified staff, and you name has been randomly selected for participation in this study. Please join us for a focus group session on (date), from (time) to (time), in Room ____. Refreshments will be served.

Your supervisor has already been asked to allow your release time to attend this focus group, but it would be a good idea to share this letter with him or her, just as a reminder. Please let us know you are coming, by calling Human Resources at extension 1675 by October 29. You don't need to bring anything—just your ideas and opinions!

Thanks! We hope to see you on the (date). If you have any questions, please feel free to give either of us a call.

Sincerely,

D. Arnie Oudenhoven
Director of Human Resources
Ext. 1675

Kim Gibson-Harman
Research Intern
Ext. 1898

October 21, 1997

Dear (supervisor name):

Human Resources is hosting a series of focus groups to assist in identifying opinions of classified staff on a variety of issues. Some of the issues are a direct outcome of the results of the survey conducted last fall; others are areas of interest to the staff of the Department of Human Resources. Attached is a letter inviting staff under your supervision to participate.

I am asking for your assistance. It would be helpful if you, as a supervisor, would both encourage and allow the selected staff member to participate. It is my hope that the individual participants will value having a forum to discuss work-related topics and issues and that the College will benefit from having such information.

Thank you for your assistance. Please feel free to contact me if you have any questions.

Sincerely,

D. Arnie Oudenhoven
Director, Human Resources

APPENDIX B:
FOCUS GROUP QUESTION PROTOCOL, CLASSIFIED STAFF

Lead-Ins

1.) When we say "staff development" or "professional development," what does that mean to you?

2.) Should this college have an expectation that people will develop professionally?

3.) What do you think the college's role should be in helping people develop professionally?

4.) How well does the college fulfill this role? Do both men and women have opportunities to develop professionally?

Professional Development and One's Worksite

5.) How supportive is your supervisor toward attendance at professional development activities? In what ways? What should we expect from supervisors in the way of support? (How do you define "support"?)

6.) In the past, when you've gotten some good training, how much support has there been to implement what you've learned back in your worksite? (Differentiate between training suggested by supervisor and training suggested by employee.)

7.) Do you think that employees should be required to formally share what they've learned at conferences with their co-workers when __CC has sponsored their conference attendance?

Re: Employee Survey Issues

8.) What are your perceptions of the morale among employees at __CC? (First, how do you define "morale"?)

9.) In the employee survey that was done last fall, there were people who felt that they didn't necessarily have all the skills or information they needed to do their jobs. Can you comment on this?

10.) What is your understanding of the ___ Classification System? (Can add: In the employee survey that was done last fall, there were some low ratings in responses to questions about the ___Classification System. Can you comment on this?)

Training Topics

11.) What are some areas affecting your job in which you'd like further training?

12.) What have been some professional development programs (on campus or off) that you have really benefited from?

13.) From your viewpoint, do you think that some supervisors could use some training? Such as? (Distinguish between information, such as laws, college policy, benefits, etc., and skills, such as communication, dealing with problem employees, fostering teamwork, etc.)

Professional Development Format

14.) Where do you prefer that staff development seminars and meetings be held? (on campus, off campus but nearby, prefer outside conferences sponsored by professional organizations, etc.)?

15.) What is the best length of a staff development program? (1 hr., 2-3 hrs., full day, etc.) Do you like the idea of lunchtime sessions?

16.) What format for learning do you like best for staff development? (smaller groups with discussion, sessions with required participation and group work, lecture format, etc.)

APPENDIX C:
FOCUS GROUP QUESTION PROTOCOL
CLASSIFIED STAFF WHO ARE SUPERVISORS/MANAGERS

Lead-Ins

1.) When we say "staff development" or "professional development," what does that mean to you?

2.) Should __CC have an expectation that people will develop professionally?

3.) What do you think the college's role should be in helping people develop professionally?

Professional Development and One's Worksite

4.) What kinds of support do you give your staff toward staff development activities? What should staff expect from supervisors in the way of support?

Re: OCC Employee Survey Issues

5.) What are your perceptions of the morale among employees at __CC? (Define morale.)

6.) What is your understanding/perception of the ___ Classification System? (Can add: In the employee survey that was done last fall, there were some low ratings in responses to questions about the ___ Classification System. Can you comment on this?)

Training Topics

7.) What are some areas affecting your job as a supervisor/manager in which you'd like further training?

8.) What have been some professional development programs (on campus or off) that you or your staff have really benefited from?

9.) What kind of training do you think your staff could use?

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